

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01
INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 TRSE-00 H-01 /033 W
-----026316 101207Z /53

R 100953Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9905

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 13854

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: PROSPECTIVE APPOINTMENT OF MRS. MARCOS AS

- DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

REF: (A) MANILA 13457; (B) MANILA 13573; (C) MANILA 13750

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: WHILE MARCOS IS SIGNALING HIS USUAL CAUTION, OUR CURRENT JUDGMENT IS THAT IMELDA'S BEING NAMED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IS LIKELY IF NOT CERTAIN. SUCH AN ACTION WOULD AMOUNT TO HER FORMAL DESIGNATION AS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSOR TO PRIMIN MARCOS IN EVENT OF HIS DEATH OR DISABILITY AND WOULD REPRESENT A MAJOR STEP FORWARD FOR MRS. MARCOS IN HER DRIVE FOR POWER. END SUMMARY.

2. REFTEL (A) REPORTS NEW SUCCESSION DECREE WHEREBY
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SENIOR DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WILL ACT AS PRIME MINISTER IN EVENT MARCOS DIES OR IS INCAPACITATED AND UNTIL INTERIM PARLIAMENT ELECTS A NEW PRIME MINISTER. REFTELS (B) AND (C) REPORT GROWING "BANDWAGON" FOR MRS. MARCOS TO BE DESIGNATED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.

3. MINISTER OF INFORMATION TATAD TOLD

AMBASSADOR AUGUST 9

THAT REPS OF GOVERNING KBL PARTY HAD MET WITH PRESIDENT EARLIER THAT DAY TO RELAY WHAT TATAD DESCRIBED AS UNANIMOUS CAUCUS DECISION OF AUGUST 8 THAT MRS. MARCOS SHOULD BE DESIGNATED DEPUTY. ACCORDING TATAD, PRESIDENT REPLIED HE NEEDED TIME TO THINK ABOUT THIS QUESTION. TATAD OBSERVED SYMPATHETICALLY THAT "IT DOES PUT HIM INTO QUITE A BIND."

4. LOCAL PRESS AUGUST 10 REPORTED THAT 30-MAN DELEGATION OF KBL ASSEMBLYMEN PRESENTED PRESIDENT WITH UNANIMOUS PARTY RESOLUTION ENDORSING MRS. MARCOS FOR POST OF DEPUTY. (CAUCUS REPORTEDLY AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE DEPUTY PRIMIN.) ACCORDING PRESS, PRESIDENT WITHHELD DECISION BECAUSE "THE PROBLEM IS OF SUCH CRITICAL IMPORTANCE THAT IT REQUIRES FURTHER STUDY." THE PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY TOLD THE DELEGATION "WE SHOULD SLEEP ON IT AS BEFIT MEN WHO HAD FOUGHT TOGETHER IN MANY A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN," ADDING THAT SEVERAL FACTORS HAD TO BE CONSIDERED, E.G., (A) CAN THE DEPUTY PRIMIN WIN IN A NATIONAL ELECTION?; (B) WOULD THE DEPUTY PRIMIN NOT CAUSE A DIVISION IN THE RANKS NOW OR IN THE FUTURE?; (C) DOES THE DEPUTY PRIMIN HAVE THE ATTITUDE TO CARRY THROUGH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW SOCIETY? MARCOS HAS SCHEDULED ANOTHER KBL CAUCUS AUGUST 11 TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER.

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5. PRESS ALSO CARRIES FURTHER FRANK REMARKS BY ASSEMBLY-MAN AND NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER OF STATE TOLENTINO BEFORE THE MANILA LION'S CLUB AUGUST 9. TOLENTINO REPORTEDLY COMMENTED THAT THE APPOINTMENT OF MRS. MARCOS AS DEPUTY PRIMIN WILL BE A "TOUGH DILEMMA" FOR THE PRESIDENT. "CONSIDERING THE PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE FIRST LADY HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HER ALMOST-EQUAL-TO-THE-PRESIDENT PRESTIGE WITHIN THE PARTY, HER COMMITMENTS TO THE IDEALS OF THE NEW SOCIETY, AND THE UNEQUALED TRUST THE PRESIDENT HAS IN HER, SHE BECOMES A LOGICAL CHOICE FOR DEPUTY PM. BUT CONSIDERING THAT SHE IS THE WIFE OF THE APPOINTING AUTHORITY (PRESIDENT MARCOS) AND SHE IS ALREADY HOLDING A COUPLE OF CONCURRENT POSITIONS, BOTH SHE AND THE PRESIDENT WILL BE SEVERELY CRITICIZED HERE AND CRUCIFIED ABROAD. HER APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY PM WILL BE JUSTIFIABLE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF MERIT AND QUALIFICATIONS, BUT MAY BE VIEWED AS NEPOTISM AND A MOVE TOWARDS A POLITICAL DYNASTY, BOTH CONDEMNED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS IN HIS BOOK "THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION" AS VICES OF THE OLD SOCIETY." TOLENTINO ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THE DEPUTY PRIMIN BECOMES ONLY A CARETAKER OF THE

GOVERNMENT IN THE EVENT OF THE DEATH OR INCAPACITY OF THE
PRIMIN, AS THE REAL SUCCESSOR IS TO BE ELECTED BY THE
PARLIAMENT.

6. COMMENT:

- (A) SOURCE CLOSE TO MRS. MARCOS COMMENTED TO AMBASSA-
DOR AUGUST 9 THAT MRS. MARCOS DESIGNATION AS DEPUTY PRIMIN
IS A "SURE THING" (ALTHOUGH IT MAY TAKE A LITTLE TIME TO
WORK OUT), NOW THAT THE PRESTIGE OF THE MARCOSES HAS BEEN
SO PUBLICLY ENGAGED IN THIS MATTER. OUR JUDGMENT AT THIS

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ACTION EA-06

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-----026296 101206Z /53

R 100953Z AUG 78

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AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MANILA 13854

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POINT IS THAT IMELDA'S APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY IS A LIKELI-
HOOD, SOONER OR LATER, IF NOT A CERTAINTY.

- (B) HER DESIGNATION AS DEPUTY WOULD REPRESENT A MAJOR
STEP FORWARD FOR IMELDA IN HER LONG-STANDING DRIVE FOR
POWER, CAPPING HER EARLIER ADVANCES UP THE LADDER AS
ROVING DIPLOMAT, METRO MANILA GOVERNOR, ASSEMBLYMAN AND
CABINET MINISTER. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUCH AN ACTION IS
THAT IT WOULD AMOUNT TO A FORMAL DESIGNATION OF MRS.
MARCOS AS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSOR TO PRIMIN MARCOS IN EVENT OF
HIS DEATH OR INCAPACITY AND WOULD CLEARLY GIVE HER THE
INSIDE TRACK TO THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP.

- (C) IN TERMS OF US INTERESTS, THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS
OF IMELDA'S DESIGNATION AS DEPUTY, AS TOLENTINO HAS
SUGGESTED, WOULD BE THE EFFECT ON US CONGRESSIONAL AND
PUBLIC OPINION AND, MORE PERTINENTLY, THE REACTION WITHIN

THE PHILIPPINES. MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MANILA13854
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780327-0710
Format: TEL
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780878/aaaacniu.tel
Line Count: 170
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 87cc5b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 78 MANILA 13457, 78 MANILA 13573, 78 MANILA 13750
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1779537
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROSPECTIVE APPOINTMENT OF MRS. MARCOS AS - DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
TAGS: PINT, RP, (MARCOS, IMELDA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/87cc5b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014